

WHAT IF I DON'T PASS THE GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXAMINATION (GQE)

This article discusses a way an Indiana student with a disability may meet the Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE) requirement if he/she does not pass the Graduation Qualifying Examination.

If a student with a disability does not pass the GQE but meets all other graduation requirements, the student may meet the graduation qualifying examination (GQE) requirement through the “waiver” or “alternate documentation” process as described in Indiana Code at IC 20-32-4-1 and IC 20-32-4-5. (NOTE: Indiana Code (IC) 20-32-4-1 contains information on the “CORE 40 waiver”, and the “waiver or alternate documentation” process for students without disabilities and students with disabilities...be sure to read the complete section to understand the applicable requirements.)

All students are expected to participate in statewide or districtwide testing. High school students with disabilities who expect to earn a diploma must take the 10th grade ISTEP+ GQE as often as required by their IEP, but at least one time. Hopefully the student will pass both (Math and Reading/Language Arts) parts of the GQE and not have to take the test again. If they do not pass both parts, students have up to four (4) additional opportunities while still in high school (2 as a junior and 2 as a senior) to take the part(s) of the GQE they did not pass. A student with a disability shall retake the graduation examination in each subject area in which the student did not achieve a passing score as often as required by the student's individualized education program (IEP).

ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

There are differences between **accommodations** and **modifications**. **Many testing accommodations are allowed** during the ISTEP+ tests and for the GQE, but **modifications are not allowed**. An accommodation does not change what is being taught or tested. An accommodation “levels the playing field” for students with disabilities. For example, a Braille version of the test is an accommodation for a student with a visual impairment. A Braille version of the test does not change what is being tested, it merely accommodates the student. Additional test time, the use of a scribe or an interpreter, using a word processor (with the grammar-check and spell-check features turned off) are other examples of accommodations which are allowed for ISTEP+ and GQE purposes. Accommodations used for ISTEP+ or GQE purposes should: 1) be accommodations the student uses for instruction and testing during the school year; 2) be accommodations that are specified for the student in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan; and 3) comply with **ISTEP+ Program Manual** requirements concerning accommodations. For example, reading comprehension portions of the ISTEP+ or GQE can not be read to the student even if the IEP or 504 Plan lists this as an accommodation for instruction and testing during the school year.

Modifications actually change what is being taught or tested. **Modifications** are generally **not permitted** if a course is being taken for credit, and **modifications are not allowed** for ISTEP+ or GQE testing. Modifications of test content or of the academic standards being assessed are not allowed in standardized testing situations such as the ISTEP+ and GQE. Students may not be administered shorter versions of the test, offered a reduced number of possible responses, or provided with simplified directions. Under no circumstances may students have portions of the reading comprehension component of the ISTEP+ or GQE read to them.

Additional information on accommodations and modifications can be found in the **ISTEP+ Program Manual 06-07**. See **Appendix C** of the **ISTEP+ Program Manual 06-07** for charts listing

accommodations. The **ISTEP+ Program Manual 06-07** can be found by selecting the **ISTEP InfoCenter** button at: <http://www.doe.state.in.us>

MORE ON THE “WAIVER” OR “ALTERNATE DOCUMENTATION” PROCESS...

A student with a disability who does not pass the graduation qualifying examination (GQE) may meet the graduation qualifying examination requirement as described in Indiana Code (law) at IC 20-32-4-1(5)(Graduation Requirements) and IC 20-32-4-5. (NOTE: IC 20-32-4-1(4) describes a similar process for students who do not have a disability). This is often referred to as the “waiver” process or the “alternate documentation” process, and applies to students with disabilities who have met all graduation requirements except passing one or both parts of the GQE. A diploma earned in this way is an official Indiana high school diploma.

IC 20-32-4-5

Sec.5.(a) This section applies to a student who is a child with a disability (as defined in IC 20-35-1-2).

b) If the student does not achieve a passing score on the graduation examination, the student’s case conference committee may determine that the student is eligible to graduate if the case conference committee finds the following:

- (1) The student’s teacher of record, in consultation with a teacher of the student in each subject area in which the student has not achieved a passing score, makes a written recommendation to the case conference committee. The recommendation must:*
 - (A) be concurred in by the principal of the student’s school; and*
 - (B) be supported by documentation that the student has attained the academic standard in the subject area based upon:*
 - (i) tests other than the graduation examination; or*
 - (ii) classroom work.*
- (2) The student meets all of the following requirements:*
 - (A) Retakes the graduation examination in each subject area in which the student did not achieve a passing score as often as required by the student’s individualized education program.*
 - (B) Completes remediation opportunities provided to the student by the student’s school to the extent required by the student’s individualized education program.*
 - (C) Maintains a school attendance rate of at least ninety-five percent (95%) to the extent required by the student’s individualized education program with excused absences not counting against the student’s attendance.*
 - (D) Maintains at least a “C” average or the equivalent in the courses comprising the credits specifically required for graduation by rule of the board.[e.g. Those courses required by the State Board of Education.]*
 - (E) Otherwise satisfies all state and local graduation requirements.*

NOTES:

1. The door never closes on your opportunity to earn a high school diploma. If you are no longer in high school and still need to pass one or both sections of the GQE in order to graduate, you can take the test at specific locations throughout the state. (Passing the GQE first became a requirement for graduation beginning with the Class of 2000.) Call the ISTEP+ Hotline at 1-888-54-ISTEP (1-888-544-7837) for more information.
2. The “waiver” or “alternate documentation” process for satisfying the GQE requirement, described above is taken from IC 20-32-4-5 and is for students with disabilities. For

information concerning the “alternate documentation” process to be followed by students who do not have a disability, and who did not achieve a passing score on the GQE, but who meet all other state and local requirements for graduation, refer to IC 20-32-4-1.

3. Legislation referring to ISTEP+ and the GQE can be found in the **ISTEP+ Program Manual 06-07**. The manual can be downloaded from the Indiana Department of Education Website at: www.doe.state.in.us/istep.
4. Students with disabilities who are not eligible to earn a diploma will generally be eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion. The Certificate of Completion is not an academic credential as is a diploma, but students receiving a Certificate of Completion are eligible to participate in any graduation ceremonies the school may sponsor. Students who are on a diploma track but do not meet the requirements to graduate with a diploma may wish to reconvene their case conference committees to revise their IEPs, so that they can receive a Certificate of Completion.
5. A student with a disability who receives a Certificate of Completion and exits high school may decide, at a later time, to return to high school if they are less than age 22 and have not completed high school graduation requirements and received a diploma. Students with disabilities are entitled to receive special education and related services until they earn a high school diploma or turn age 22, whichever comes first. See **Article 7** (Indiana’s special education rule) at 511 IAC 7-18-2(a).
6. **Check with your principal or guidance counselor for any changes in state or local graduation requirements. Make sure you have current and accurate information! Schools can have local graduation requirements that are in addition to the state minimum graduation requirements.**
7. See Indiana DOE website <http://www.doe.state.in.us> for additional information on course and graduation requirements. This publication primarily addresses one way a student with a disability who meets all requirements for graduation except for passing the GQE may become eligible for a diploma and meet the GQE requirement through IC 20-32-4-5.
8. A copy of the document, **Documents for Students Who Satisfy Course Requirements for Graduation but Who Do Not Satisfy the Graduation Qualifying Examination Requirement**, is available on the Department of Education website at: doe.state.in.us Select the Superintendent’s Mail button for the September 22, 2006 Superintendent’s Mail.
9. A new GQE waiver option became available as a result of Public Law 181-2006 (House Enrolled Act 1347) which was passed by the Indiana General Assembly in March 2006. The legislation allows an additional option for students who do not pass the Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE). This option is described in a **Memorandum** from Jeff Zaring, Indiana Department of Education, State Board of Education Administrator, to High School Principals and Superintendents, May 19, 2006.